

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

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ACTION ARA-17

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-09 H-02 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-14 USIA-12

RSR-01 /084 W

----- 087612

R 022104 Z APR 73

FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9283

INFO USCINCSO FOR POLAD

C O N F I D E N T I A L CARACAS 2796

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, VE

SUBJECT: VILLALBA PROCLAIMED URD' S PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE

1. AS PLANNED, URD CONGRESS ON APRIL 1 NAMED BY ACCLAMATION JOVITO VILLALBA AS URD' S PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE FOR DECEMBER ELECTIONS, MAKING HIM EIGHTH OFFICIALLY NAMED PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE. SENATOR LEONARDO MONTIEL ORTEGA SELECTED AS CAMPAIGN MANAGER.

2. VETERAN POLITICAL LEADER VILLALBA IS EXPECTED TO WAGE A VIGOROUS CAMPAIGN, ALTHOUGH EVERYONE RECOGNIZES URD HAS NO CHANCE OF WINNING ELECTIONS. URD HAS BEEN IN STATE OF DECLINE FOR SEVERAL YEARS, AND ENTRY INTO AND THEN WITHDRAWAL FROM NEW FORCE COALITION FURTHER WEAKENED PARTY IN PUBLIC EYE AND CAUSED IMPORTANT DEFECTIONS, PARTICULARLY AMONG YOUTH AND IN ZULIA STATE. NEVERTHELESS VILLALBA IS STILL BELIEVED TO HOLD CONSIDERABLE PERSONAL DRAWING POWER, AND MIGHT DRAW, SAY, FIVE TO EIGHT PERCENT OF THE VOTE IF HE REMAINS A CANDIDATE AND CONTESTS THE ELECTIONS.

LITTLE , IF ANYTHING, CAN BE CONSIDERED CERTAIN ABOUT WHAT THE OPPORTUNISTIC URD WILL DO, BUT THE ODD' S NOW SEEM TO FAVOR VILLALBA' S REMAINING A CANDIDATE AND RUNNING, LARGELY TO HOLD THE PARTY TOGETHER AND SALVAGE SOME CONGRESSIONAL SEATS.

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3. THERE HAS BEEN MUCH SPECULATION HERE ABOUT AN ELECTORAL COLATION BETWEEN URD AND EITHER AD OR COPEI, BUT URD LEADERS HAVE REPEATEDLY DENIED SUCH A POSSIBILITY. HOWEVER, IT IS CONCEIVABLE THAT VILLALBA COULD MAKE A SECRET PRE- ELECTION DEAL WITH COPEI TO RUN ON HIS OWN AND THEN OBTAIN GOVERNMENT POSTS FOR HIM AND OTHER URD LEADERS IN NEXT ADMINISTRATION IF COPEI WINS. A NUMBER OF COPEI FIGURES HAVE HINTED AT THIS POSSIBILITY, SAYING THAT VILLALBA WOULD TAKE AWAY MORE VOTES FROM AD THAN COPEI, PARTICULARLY IN EASTERN REGION OF COUNTRY. LAST WEEK, IN FACT, COPEI CAMPAIGN COORDINATOR OSWALDO ALVAREZ PAZ TOLD POLITICAL COUNSELOR THAT SUCH A DEAL IS IN THE WORKS AND THAT COPEI MIGHT EVEN SUBSIDIZE VILLALBA' S CAMPAIGN.
MCCLINTOCK

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*** Current Handling Restrictions *** n/a

*** Current Classification *** CONFIDENTIAL

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 02 APR 1973
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: garlanwa
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973CARACA02796
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: RR
Errors: n/a
Film Number: n/a
From: CARACAS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19730430/aaaahjmk.tel
Line Count: 81
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: garlanwa
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 24 JAN 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <24-Jan-2002 by martinjw>; APPROVED <13 FEB 2002 by garlanwa>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: <DBA CORRECTED> gwr 971117
Subject: VILLALBA PROCLAIMED URD' S PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE
TAGS: PINT, VE
To: ARA
SECSTATE WASHDC
USCINCSO FOR POLAD
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005